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EDITORIAL NOTES

When Boston adopted the plan of a school board of five members and followed this by the selection of public-spirited, broad-minded men for its board, and by the election of Superintendent Brooks, the public looked forward with confidence to the results. The recently issued report of the superintendent for the year 1906-7 presents material which cannot fail to impress as highly significant all interested in the progress of education. The two ideals of administrative efficiency and adaptation to social needs are both represented. Various detailed improvements have already received notice in our department of "Notes and News." What could not be indicated by these single items is the effort for co-operation between various parts of the school system. The higher officials evidently realize that the best results can be obtained only by giving opportunity and responsibility to teachers. The revision of the course of study made necessary by a reduction of the elementary-school period from nine to eight years while made under the general direction of the board of superintendents was dependent for its details upon the work done by special committees.

*THE BOSTON
SCHOOLS*

The enthusiasm with which these committees entered upon their work, the painstaking care with which the details were worked out, and the careful scrutiny given to each item by teachers of the highest success in that particular line guarantee that the course of study is not something arbitrarily imposed by higher authority, but that it is the product of harmonious and co-operative effort on the part of all the educational forces concerned therewith.

Teachers everywhere will be especially interested in what is said of the new plan for the sabbatical year. Certain features that perhaps would not be generally thought of are already in evidence. Teachers who have applied for the year's leave of absence on half-pay for purposes of study, travel, or rest are not only to receive the advantage of that year—many are now making preparation by private study or otherwise to make the best use of the year when the year's leave is taken. Some will complete their residence for the college degree, others will travel. In the opinion of the superintendent "it is doubtful that any single provision in the new regulations will accomplish more for the benefit of the schools than the one providing for the sabbatical year."

Of special interest to teachers in high schools is the statement as to "change of ideals in high-school instruction." The fact that "approximately one-fourth of the pupils attending the high schools did not find therein work of such a standard or of such a nature that they could perform it satisfactorily" has been made a definite problem for consideration.

If now and then a pupil should fail to do the work, it would perhaps be justifiable to say that he is not qualified to profit from high-school instruction and that he should be excluded from the school; but when 25 per cent. of all the pupils in the high schools of the city fail to do the work required, a course of exclusion cannot be successfully defended. These pupils are as justified in demanding high-school instruction adapted to their needs as are the pupils who find it possible to do the work now offered.

To consider this problem, as well as the new problems growing out of the change in the elementary-school period from nine to eight years, a committee of conference was appointed, consisting of superintendents, assistant superintendents, the high-school principals, five elementary-school principals, and several high-school and elementary-school teachers. The problems were discussed "from the point of view of how the high schools will need to be modified in order to meet the needs of the pupils rather than how to make the pupils meet the present standards of the high schools." For one thing it became evident that administrative standards had an important bearing. "So long as teachers feel that their own success is to be measured by the number of pupils that reach certain fixed and traditionary standards of scholarship, they must of necessity look with doubt, if not displeasure, upon those who cannot attain to those standards. What has been done is to point out clearly that the success of a teacher should be judged, and now will be judged, by her ability to provide work of such a nature that all the members of her class not grossly indolent can reach a satisfactory standard of achievement. To have 20 per cent. of a class fail to pass is full proof either that the work is not adapted to the class or that the teacher is inefficient, and yet in many classes the percentage of failures has risen to 35 or even to 40 per cent." While it is expressly disclaimed that the problem has been solved, the reader will readily agree "that the conditions for its solution have been produced." These conditions are an effort to look at the question from the standpoint of the child and a spirit of sympathy, mutual understanding, and co-operation between the elementary- and high-school teachers, and between teachers, principals, and superintendents.